

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, October 6, 2000

Responsibilities of the Strategic Team at the State Office

By Caren J. Frost

With the many changes that DCFS is experiencing and has experienced over the past few months, I thought I should let you know what my team does and who you can contact for information. The Strategic Team at the State Office is composed of the following individuals, who are responsible for the listed items. I have not made a comprehensive list here—but I believe this information will assist you when you have questions and need a direct answer. Please e-mail or call us if you have any questions or if you need information about something!

Person	Primary Responsibility	Products
Helen Dipo	Human Resources, Personnel	Personnel Information Updates, Retention Strategies, Performance Plans
Navina Forsythe	Research, Data Integrity, Outcomes	Annual Federal and State Reports, Ad Hoc External and Internal Reports, Special Data Requests
Reina Forsythe	Report Development	Ad Hoc External and Internal Reports
Caren Frost	DCFS Board, Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group, Research, Outcomes, Quality Improvement	Milestone Plan and Addenda, Human Subjects Committee
Brooklynn Gray	Public Interaction	Information on DCFS
Carol Miller	Publications, Performance Milestone Plan	Outcomes Report, DCFS Website, Bi-Monthly and Annual Reports
Karrie Penney	Special Data Projects, Forecasting	Annual Federal Reports, Ad Hoc External and Internal Reports, DV and IL Outcomes Data
Linda Prince	Special Data Projects, Trend Analysis	Annual Federal Reports, Ad Hoc External and Internal Reports, Outcomes Data Requests

Developing “Seasoned” Foster Families—Article 1

By Joelle Horel

DCFS regards our foster families as vital and equal members of our service team. From daily experience with the children in their care, foster parents possess critical information. This information is essential when making any decision about the child. DCFS has made progress in our inclusion of foster parents. Our further efforts in this endeavor will lead to better care for our children and families, fewer placement disruptions, better retention of quality foster parents, and (with a little more work up-front) fewer crises for caseworkers. Both the new Practice Model and the Cluster Model (a new pilot program of foster/adoptive/kin parent support) will assist workers in implementing Foster Parent Developer skills.

For the next three editions of the Weekly Update, we will include information on foster parenting. This series of articles is intended to assist workers in relating to the experience of new foster parents and their families as they go through the process of becoming foster parents. While waiting has always been an expectation for prospective adoptive families, it has only become a factor recently for foster families as well. There are several reasons for this occurrence: preparation, best match criteria, and development time. We would like to assist caseworkers in explaining these reasons and providing suggestions for how to help foster parents make use of their waiting time. This week's article will address the preparation time. (Note: This information will also be included in the Foster Roster in the near future.)

Preparation

Preservice classes provide an opportunity for the foster family to learn various aspects of foster parenting. This awareness allows them to decide whether fostering is appropriate for their family. It also allows them the opportunity of determining what types of children they will best be able to parent (age, race, how many, type of special need, etc.) After agency preparation, the most successful foster families take time to complete a number of other steps to ready themselves for placement. Many families use this time to more thoroughly investigate types of special needs and fostering issues. The Utah Foster Care Foundation will have helpful ongoing training sessions, materials, and web sites for further study. After a child is placed with a foster family, time for reading and studying becomes a scarce commodity!

Time before a child is placed in a foster home offers an excellent opportunity to complete a "resource scavenger hunt" in the foster family's own community. If the foster parents are interested in fostering children who have attention deficit disorder, connection with the local chapter of CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder) to receive information and visit their lending library is suggested. Getting to know the programs available to children with special needs within the foster family's neighborhood school (and their racial composition) can be useful as well. If a foster family is interested in fostering a child outside their own racial or ethnic heritage, the time to find and get involved with those communities is now. For example, it is helpful to learn which churches in the foster family's area have predominantly African American or Hispanic congregations, identify salons that provide appropriate hair care, etc.

On a very practical level, it is suggested that the foster family begin to seek out potential babysitters and make child care arrangements. The majority of foster children should not be tended by a neighbor's 12-year-old daughter. It may take a while to find people who have experience working with children who have special needs. Looking now will save time and allow for breaks as needed.

Another practical task includes determining what additional furniture or household supplies may be needed. Besides beds, if the foster family is considering fostering sibling groups, is there enough kitchen chairs, silverware, towels, etc.? Are the foster family's washer and dryer capable of handling the increased workload?

When selecting families for children, DCFS workers usually feel more comfortable placing with foster families they know. To help DCFS workers get to know new foster parents, suggest that they frequently attend Foster Family Association, DCFS Cluster, and Utah Foster Care Foundation functions. Suggest that they introduce themselves to workers and tell them a little about their family and the types of children they hope to foster. Offer opportunities to provide respite care for other foster parents or help with childcare during training sessions. This gives foster families valuable experience and demonstrates a willingness to work with the agency team.

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

Almost all SCF cases should be created in SAFE based upon a prior CPS case (probably at least 80-90%). Benefits are: 1) much easier and more accurate to do—the alternative creates a lot of extra work for the SCF people; 2) better tracking of service progression across cases in SAFE; and 3) more accurate reporting on results of CPS removals and the origins of SCF cases. In a small percentage of cases (probably less than 10%) there is no prior CPS investigation, and the SCF case must be created “from scratch” or by using a different case type than CPS. These exceptions may include court-ordered custody without prior DCFS involvement, protective supervision plan failure, and voluntary custody cases.

In DCFS, currently only about one-half of new SCF cases are being created from a CPS prior (53.4% in the period June 15 through September 15, 2000). Review of SCF openings shows that almost all of these cases have a related CPS investigation. Therefore, we are opening way too many SCF cases THE HARD WAY. The rule is: *when a CPS case results in a removal and temporary or adjudicated custody is given to DCFS, SCF case creation should ALWAYS use the CPS case as the prior.*

Here is how to do it in SAFE: Either have case context (be in the CPS case or have it highlighted) when you click on Case Creation in RMB or Menu Module, or enter the CPS case ID in the prior case field when you open the Case Creation window.

Offices that seem to have a handle on this problem right now are:

Region or Office	New SCF Cases (06/15/00 to 09/15/00)	Percentage of New SCF Cases Created From Prior CPS Case
American Fork	13	100%
Brigham	8	100%
Roosevelt	7	100%
Panguich	2	100%
Payson	7	86%
Jackson	15	80%
Kearns	10	80%

Advisory Councils

By Carol Miller

There are currently six advisory councils that work with DCFS. **Sharon Smith** from the Consumer Hearing Panel recently began performing all of the support functions for all six of the advisory councils. We just wanted to take a moment to say thank you to Sharon for her willingness to take on this important function!

DCFS Western Region and the Park City Office

By Linda O'Brien

Effective October 16, 2000, the Western Region will assume the Park City office as part of its region. A new code has been set up in USSDS as the office designation (WSC), with the old code remaining in USSDS until fiscal year-end. Also, WSC will be added to the SAFE tables and will be available for use on October 16, 2000. Please contact me by e-mail or at 801-538-4642 if you have any questions about this matter.

Survey on the Consumer Evaluation Proposal by Eric Bjorklund

By Caren J. Frost

For all of you who saw Eric Bjorklund's proposal about a consumer evaluation of DCFS administration and management at the Child Welfare Institute on Wednesday, October 4, 2000, I would like to have you complete a survey so that we can determine the level of interest in conducting this evaluation. If you did not complete a survey and would like to do so, please let me or Linda Winger know. We will e-mail you the survey and request that you fax it back to us anonymously at (801) 538-3993. Thank you!

Weekly Update of September 29, 2000—Additional Information

By Richard Anderson

Two articles appeared in last week's update, which we would like to provide additional information about at this time.

Practice Model Facilitators

We listed practice model facilitators in the previous Weekly Update. However, as Anita Sorensen and Julie Thomson brought to our attention, we failed to include **Duane Betournay, Scotti Davis, LeRoy Franke, and Anita Sorensen** as practice model facilitators. Thank you for the heads-up, Anita and Julie. We sincerely apologize to all four of these terrific individuals for our oversight!

Family-Centered Practice

An attachment to this article was included, which was entitled "Best Practice, A Snapshot Family-Centered Practice." It is important to note that this "snapshot" was provided by The National Resource Center of Family-Centered Practice.